527 on hilltop poles and lights. The young people gather to sing, dance, play games, and make merry, the older people to talk and enjoy the fun of the young. It is the climax of the summer, the time of the short light nights in the northern [777] countries. According to old fairy tales,[1] the fern is supposed to bloom this night and the person who can find it will have good luck. The im- 186 527 portance of this holiday in Estonia was increased when June 23rd was made a patriotic holiday, Võidupüha, 'Victory Day.' On this day runners were sent from the capital by the Riigivanem, later the President, all through the country carrying live torches. By these "victory fires" the people listened to patriotic speeches, musical performances and other entertainment. Võidupüha, like all other national holidays (Independence Day, etc.), is now forbidden.

[1 For folktales see -143- cat IIC, pp 5-171--Analyst]

515 Every farm has its own saun (steam bath) which is heated on Saturday night, and here the whole family has a thorough perspiration and washing, followed in summer by swimming in a river or lake, if one is near. In the towns are operated big commercial bathhouses which are patronized [757] by people who have none of their own. This sauna tradition is an old and cherished Finnish-Estonian custom and for centuries has been used also for medicinal purposes--to cure colds, muscular aches and the like.

•777 There are many superstitions and prejudices in Estonia which in modern times are no longer seriously believed. A few common ones are:

[787] On New Year's Eve, melted tin is cast into cold water and the future is prophesied from the shape of the cast.

If the first person one meets on New Year's

777 Day is a man, one will have good luck; but if the first person is an old woman, it means bad luck. A woman with child does not mean bad luck.

[784] To avoid a quarrel one should not shake hands with another over a threshold.

Returning to the house after you have left it, to retrieve something you have forgotten, may bring evil; it is better to do without the forgotten thing.

A person is supposed to have bad luck on the day he accidentally puts his clothes on wrong-side out.

A spider brings good luck when seen in the night, it brings worries in the morning, and sorrows in the daytime.

To meet three chimney-sweeps on the street means good luck.